

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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The Sherman Rose

If there is controversy over the truth of the Sherman rose legend, there is also a difference of opinion as to the color of the Sherman rose.

After hearing a statement over the radio that the rose was pink, though most folks think the original rose was yellow, we went into an extensive research program; the results of which we will relate today.

Mrs. Jane Todd, one of the Peninsula's most beloved and experienced gardeners during her life time in Monterey, always declared that the rose was white with a pink blush.

In my own garden, at Casa Soberanes, I have a small double rose which first appears quite pink and then fades to almost pure white. This rose, I have been told many times, is the Sherman rose.

The late Francis E. Lester, who was a real rosarian of the English variety, and whose rose gardens in Monterey were a tourist attraction for many years, had a yellow rose, the Chromatella, which he claimed was the original rose planted by Senorita Bonifacio in the Bonifacio adobe on Alvarado Street.

In "Roses of Yesterday" Mr. Lester listed Chromatella as the "Cloth of Gold: the Sherman Rose (1843)," and used an attractive black and white cut of a group of these roses to illustrate his description of this famous rose. It is described as: "A vigorous overblooming climber, with disease proof foliage and double fawn-yellow fragrant flowers in profusion." The original rose was named the Sherman rose, to commemorate a romantic love-legend of Old Monterey.

After hearing and reading all these various descriptions and tales of the Sherman rose we ventured to the Casa Bonifacio, on Mesa road, and talked with Mrs. Guy Catlin, the present owner of this charming old adobe which had been torn down brick by brick and re-constructed by the late J.C. Anthony, on the Mesa. The First National Bank now occupies its former location on Alvarado Street.

Here we saw the climbing rose over the entrance arbor and gateway, just as it had been planted in its original setting. A slip of the rose was also planted over the balcony at the rear of the house. Both bushes are in

excellent condition, perfectly healthy, well trimmed and in full bud. Mrs. Catlin relates that the rose is a pale yellow, and fades to almost a white before it drops. So we are reasonably sure now that the original Sherman rose was yellow.

Mr. Anthony had taken the original bush from Alvarado Street and planted it at the reconstructed Sherman Rose House on Mesa road. He also took slips and sold them to several rosarians, both on the Peninsula and elsewhere, and presented the finances thus acquired to the Monterey Civic Club.

The Sherman Rose Adobe, or Casa Bonifacio as it is named on the historic marker at the entrance, was built about 1835 by Jose Rafael Gonzales, custom's administrator and early alcalde of Monterey.

After its reconstruction it was owned by the late California artist, Percy Gray.